

Chairman Perone, Chairman LeBeau, Member of the Commerce Committee, 'tis to you I give thanks for allowing me to come and say what I feel should be spoken. My name is Phillip Michel, and I am from Griswold, Connecticut and I am with a group that is here to support the SB 141. This bill would grant the ECPAA \$500,000 to be used for the creation of a performing arts center in Eastern Connecticut.

This would benefit the community in my opinion. Firstly, ECPAA is a non-profit group. For small fees, PEOPLE can become educated in the performing arts. I say people because this group invites not just students, such as myself, but PEOPLE within a wide range of ages. The ECPAA offers sessions for young children, students, and adults.

This brings opportunity to the community. Once, I happened to be in the next room over from a dance class for younger children, and so, momentarily, I watched the class. I have nothing but positive remarks of it. Firstly, the children seemed to be in a safe environment. I had known the instructor, and she is trustworthy. Even without my background knowledge of her, she seemed to be kind and working well with the children. But most importantly, the children seemed to be having fun, which I admit brought a smile to my face.

As each generation passes, it seems that there is a desire for the next generation to have more: more opportunities, more success, more happiness. A common example of this statement is the desire that many parents have for their child to finish high school, go to college, and live happily ever after with their spouse, that they married AFTER they finished college, and their children, who came to be AFTER they finished college and, of course, AFTER marriage. By granting these funds, our generations can provide more for the next, and even many after that. In fact, there is still time for you to provide for mine.

With these funds, the program can grow, and that is what is best for the community and the next generation. As the program grows, more and more people will become involved and opportunities will be more easily obtainable. Jobs will come to our town. Money will come to our town. Opportunities for young people to advance themselves financially and artistically will be available. Children who become involved might find their passions in the arts, and why should we not give them the opportunity to find those passions. What if history's greatest people simply had no passion to do what they did? If Martin Luther King Jr. had no passion to stand for civil rights, if Americans had no passion to stand against oppression. What would this world be like? It is important to allow for passions to be found, and this program allows for people to find those passions, and at an early age so that they can become great at what they love and want to do.

As I left from the spot that I stood in while watching the class, I kept my smile and was happy to know that some of those kids were put in safer environments than they would be if they were not there at that time. I knew that some of those kids were discovering parts of them; perhaps even their passions. But most importantly, I realized that those kids were having a good time and that the program did provide benefits to this community. Thank you for your time.